



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

April 29, 2005

TO: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley *for*
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **WALDEN FAMILY SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT
REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Walden Family Services Foster Family Agency (Walden or Agency), a Foster Family Agency service provider. The review was conducted by the Auditor-Controller's Countywide Contract Monitoring Division.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Walden, a private, non-profit, community-based organization to recruit, train, and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children placed in foster care by DCFS. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Walden is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management services and act as a liaison between DCFS and the foster parents. Walden has offices in Lancaster, Mission Hills and Riverside. We reviewed Walden's Lancaster and Mission Hills operations that oversee a total of 81 certified foster homes in which 117 DCFS children were placed. Both offices are located in the Fifth District.

DCFS pays Walden a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Funding and Rate Bureau. Based on the child's age, Walden receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these amounts, the Agency pays the foster parents between \$624 and \$790 per

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

month, per child. For Fiscal Year 2003-04, DCFS paid Walden approximately \$3,570,000.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Walden was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Walden's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Walden received the appropriate reimbursement rate for each child and whether the certified foster parents received their portion of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files, and interviewed Walden's staff, the children and the foster parents. We also visited a sample of certified foster homes to complete a home inspection.

Results of Review

Generally, Walden provided the services required by the County contract. The foster parents stated that the services that they received from the Agency met their expectations, and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. In addition, Walden maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their social worker case loads did not exceed the maximum allowed by CDSS Title 22.

The Agency needs to improve their oversight of the foster homes by ensuring that the foster parents store unsafe items, such as kitchen knives, cleaning solutions and pesticides, in a secured location as required by the County contract. Walden also needs to ensure that foster parents schedule the children's required dental exams within the timeframes specified by the County contract. In addition, Walden needs to maintain current court authorizations for the children that receive psychotropic medications and written authorizations from the children's DCFS social workers approving the children's Needs and Service Plans.

The details of our review, along with recommendation for corrective action, are attached.

Review of Report

On March 24, 2005, we discussed our report with Walden who agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Walden management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations contained in the report. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Walden for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (626) 293-1102.

JTM:MO:DC

Attachment

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Dr. David Sanders, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Jerome Smith, Walden Family Services Foster Family Agency
Colleen Anderson, Community Care Licensing
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**CENTRALIZED CONTRACT MONITORING
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2004-2005
WALDEN FAMILY SERVICES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY**

PROGRAM SERVICES

Objective

To determine whether Walden Family Services Foster Family Agency (Walden or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 Regulations.

Verification

We visited nine of the 81 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Walden billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) for in July and August 2004 and interviewed the 15 foster parents and the 17 children placed in the nine homes. We also reviewed the documentation in their case files and the Agency's monitoring activity.

Results

Generally, Walden provided the services required by the County contract and Title 22. The children's Needs and Services Plans appropriately addressed their educational and health needs and available emancipation services when appropriate. (However, as noted below, the Needs and Service Plans were not always approved by the DCFS social workers.) The quarterly reports that Walden prepared and sent to the children's DCFS social workers were timely and included the information required by the County contract. In addition, the children's case files indicated that Walden's social workers made the required visits to the foster homes.

Although Walden provided most of the services required by the County contract, Walden needs to improve their oversight of the foster homes in the following areas:

- For two (22%) of the nine foster homes visited, the foster parents did not secure kitchen knives, cleaning solutions and pesticides as required by the County contract.
- For one (20%) of the five children using psychotropic medication, Walden did not have a current court authorization as required by the County contract. Walden needs to ensure that the prescribing doctor issues a renewal notice to the court in a timely manner.
- For two (12%) of the 17 children, Walden did not ensure that the children received dental treatment within the required timeframes. Specifically, one

child's initial dental exam was seven months late, and the second child's initial dental exam was two weeks late. In addition, the second child's dentist indicated that the child needed three extractions and multiple fillings. However, the child did not receive the recommended dental treatment until six months later.

- For 10 (59%) of the 17 children, Walden did not receive written approval from the DCFS social workers approving the children's Needs and Services Plans as required by the County contract.
- For 18 (51%) of the 35 children whose placements with a foster home ended in July and August 2004, Walden's Termination Reports did not assess the children's overall adjustment to the placement, educational and developmental progress, medical and psychological history, or the children's goals and progress in achieving those goals, as required by the County contract.
- For 2 (12%) of the 17 children, Walden's assigned social workers did not maintain documentation of their monthly contact with the DCFS social workers to update them on the children's progress as required by the County contract.

Walden needs to ensure that foster parents store unsafe items in a secured location. Walden also needs to ensure that foster parents schedule dental exams within the timeframes specified in the County contract and Title 22. In addition, Walden needs to ensure that Needs and Services Plans and Termination Reports contain all required information and that DCFS social workers document the child's progress on a monthly basis.

Recommendations

Walden management:

- 1. Ensure that foster parents store unsafe items in a secured location as required by the County contract.**
- 2. Ensure that foster parents schedule dental exams within the timeframes specified in the County contract and that current court authorization is maintained for children using psychotropic medications.**
- 3. Ensure that the Needs and Services Plans and Termination Reports contain all information required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.**
- 4. Ensure that staff contact the DCFS social workers on a monthly basis to discuss the children's progress.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION**Objective**

To determine whether the program participants actually received the services for which Walden billed DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed 11 children placed in 9 certified foster homes and the 15 foster parents to confirm the services Walden billed to DCFS.

Results

The program participants interviewed stated that the services they received from Walden met their expectations and their assigned social workers were supportive and usually visited the children more than required.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS**Objective**

Determine whether Walden's social workers' caseloads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than 6 social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed Walden's three supervising social workers and 11 social workers. Caseload statistics and payroll records for July and August 2004 were also reviewed.

Results

The social workers' caseloads averaged 11 placements and the supervising social workers supervised an average of four social workers during July and August 2004.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**Objective**

Determine whether Walden's staff meets the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether Walden conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

Verification

We interviewed Walden's two program directors, two supervising social workers and ten social workers. In addition, we reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

Walden's program directors, supervising social workers and social workers possess the required education (college degrees) and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Walden completed hiring clearances for staff assigned to the County contract.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.



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April 7, 2005

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Executive Director Mindy Watrous

Re: Centralized Contract Monitoring Foster Family Agency Program Fiscal Year
2004-2005 Walden Family Services Foster Family Agency

This letter is in response to the audit results of Walden Family Services completed by your office. Walden is in general agreement with the findings with noted observations.

Recommendation: Ensure that foster parents store unsafe items in a secured location required by the County contract.

Corrective Action Plan: In the two homes were unsafe items that were not secured properly. We ensured that the two foster homes were in compliance immediately. Walden foster parents are trained on the proper protocol for securing unsafe items during their pre-certification training. Walden Social Workers will continue to monitor foster homes for compliance during monthly and quarterly home inspections. In addition, foster homes are also inspected for compliance during the annual re-certification process.

Recommendation: Ensure that foster parents schedule dental exams within the timeframes specified in the County contract and that current court authorization is maintained for children using psychotropic medications.

Corrective Action Plan: Foster parents are informed of the 30-day allotted timeframe for dental exams during their pre-certification training. Additionally, this topic is discussed with foster parents at the time of placement. Walden Social Workers will ensure that dental visits are scheduled within the first 30 days of a placement.

Walden's continuous quality improvement process monitors the compliance of psychotropic medication authorizations on a quarterly basis. Walden Social Workers and Social Worker Supervisors will monitor the compliance with psychotropic medication authorizations and will follow-up with physician and CSW to keep authorizations current. While our Walden Social Workers are diligent about following up with the County Social Workers and prescribing physicians to obtain court approval for psychotropic medications, we do not have the authority to fill out the necessary



- TREATMENT FOSTER FAMILY SERVICES
- TREATMENT FOSTER CARE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
- MENTORING PROGRAM

paperwork for submission to the court. The prescribing physician must complete and sign the forms. Some physicians are resistant to assist in the process. Our efforts in this process were documented at the time of the audit.

Recommendation: Ensure that the Needs and Service Plans and Termination Reports (specifically the discharge summary) contain all information required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

Corrective Action Plan: Revisions have been made to the Discharge Summary to include all the information required by the LA County contract and Title 22 regulations. The staff has been trained on how to properly complete the revised discharge summary.

Recommendation: Ensure DCFS social workers are updated on the children's progress on a monthly basis.

Corrective Action Plan: Walden Social Workers will attempt to make contact with the CSW on a minimum of once per month. In addition CSW will receive a written notification of all scheduled treatment team reviews. This will be documented in the child file. Prior to the audit a tracking system had already been put in place.

The above corrective action plans were implemented immediately. Walden Family Services always strives to provide program services in accordance with our County contract and California Department of Social Services.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (619) 584-5777 extension 247.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,



Mindy Watrous
Executive Director